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NEW
TENDENCIES
IN TEACHING
RELIGION



HAROLD J. SHERIDAN

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New Tendencies in Teaching Religion

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CHAPTER I

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW METHODS

WE are in the midst of a remarkable development in the technique of teaching religion. The contrast between the "modern" classroom and that of a few years ago indicates something of the extent of the changes taking place. Even the most superficial acquaintanceship with the two reveals the fact that they are different. Indeed, the casual visitor is likely to find the difference a bit bewildering. He may come away from the newer type of class-work with the feeling that it is interesting and perhaps valuable but certainly not a "lesson." Whereas formerly the teacher seemed to be "teaching" now the class, if it is still to be called by that name, is engaged in activities or projects. The pupils are no longer studying lessons in the traditional way. Instead they are busy with the practical affairs of life.

* * *

Whence come these new tendencies in teaching method? How has it happened that we have departed so radically from our traditional classroom procedures?

A principal factor in the case has been a widespread dissatisfaction with the results of the methods formerly in vogue. Again and again teachers have had the disappoint-

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ing experience of laboring earnestly to get the pupils to remember certain facts or to comprehend great principles of life only to see these pupils behave in ways that revealed little effect from the whole affair. In fact, casual experience and what little scientific research has been carried on in connection with the question both suggest that traditional teaching procedures have been highly wasteful and inefficient. There need be no hesitation about trying new methods on the ground of the outstanding success obtained with the old.

The deficiencies of our traditional methods have been rendered particularly apparent and serious by the acuteness of the moral and religious needs of the time. The social world in which we live is different in nature as well as in size and complexity from that of our forefathers. It is a world in which radical changes have taken place in life philosophies and in modes of living. Old sanctions are dissolving. With the increase of knowledge and power there have emerged in recent times moral and religious problems that for magnitude and complexity seem to outstrip any that the race has ever before had to solve. This means that the educational burden of to-day is markedly heavier than that of an earlier time. Any ineffectiveness of method becomes increasingly evident and vastly more serious in its consequences. Thus the emergence of new social problems becomes a significant impetus to the reconstruction of educational method.

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✓ A second and genuinely important factor has been the development of a new understanding of human nature and a greatly increased confidence that fundamentally it is intelligible. It is true that the past has had its students of human nature and that many of them have shown real skill in the study of personality and the guidance of human activity into higher ways of living. Nevertheless, there is reason for insisting that the present age is a time of significant advance along these lines. There have been remarkable discoveries in the fields of psychology, sociology, education, and religion. There has been a great increase of knowledge of and insight into the nature of human personality. There has come a new appreciation of the forces that contribute to its development. Put in another way, we may say that the conviction has been developed that cause and effect play as important a part in human learning as they do in physics and chemistry. Scholars readily admit that they have made a mere beginning in the analysis of facts and the solution of problems. At the same time they manifest high optimism as to the ultimate results. They act as though they were working upon a riddle, but upon one that, given time and skill, they will ultimately be able to solve. They confess freely that their facts are elusive and the relationships complicated, but they are strongly inclined to insist that they are ultimately intelligible.

The logical outcome of the idea that learning is orderly ✓

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and intelligible is the conviction that it may be controlled. As long as the learning process was regarded as an enigma efforts to promote it were necessarily rather futile. Once the process is conceded to be intelligible there comes a confidence that it yields to control. To admit this is to write a new charter for education.

43 Growing directly out of this better understanding of human nature there has come a new attitude toward the possibility of teaching religion and morals. Indeed, the idea that they can be learned, and so can be taught, has taken firm root. Now, this idea is more revolutionary than on first sight might be apparent. While the church has long had Sunday schools and while it carried on educational work long before these Sunday schools had their origin, it has been inclined to think of religion as something that is caught rather than taught. In truth, the idea of really teaching religion is so new that it is by no means universally accepted to-day. The church instead of addressing itself directly to the task of developing the religious life has often aimed to teach the pupils certain things that are considered to be preliminary to the actual process of becoming religious. Many of its teachers have assumed that this process would take place by itself and largely apart from their efforts. They believed that they might teach the Bible or various things about religion but they did not claim to teach religion. It was their hope that as the pupils studied the lessons and partici-

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pated in the programs they would somehow "catch" religion.

In contrast to the idea that religion is caught the modern church school tends to take the position that it is teaching religion, so much so that this school is sometimes called a school of the religious life. It is true that it makes use of some of the materials and methods that were included in the program of an earlier day. But the teacher who uses these expects them to contribute to the religious development of the pupils in certain direct and definite ways.

Perhaps the most immediate factor in the development of the modern methods of teaching is a new insight into the nature of the principles involved in the learning process. Here again scholars admit that they have made a mere beginning on the problem. But already enough is known to enable us to go forward with increased assurance in the development of educational procedures. We are able to teach better because we have a more accurate knowledge of what happens when people learn.

Back of all of these factors there is the tremendous influence of the new scientific spirit that is permeating present-day thought and practice in truly marvelous fashion. People who little realize it are coming under the influence of science, and especially of the new science of psychology, in a multitude of ways. There are those who profess not to approve of either the methods or the find-

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ings of modern psychology, and there are those who take little interest in the matter. But none of them can quite escape the effects of the work done in that field. Whether they like it or not, whether they realize it or not, the people of this day are having the fundamentals of their thinking recast by the findings of the scientist, and especially of the workers in this new field of study.

* * *

In the chapters which follow an effort will be made to locate and disentangle some of the more significant tendencies in methods of procedure in modern religious education.

That such an examination is justifiable should scarcely need argument. Vast interests are at stake. Considered merely from the financial standpoint there is to be taken into account an annual investment in religious education that is immense. Thinking of it from the viewpoint of personality values, the significance of the problem is hardly measurable.

If the various tendencies were found in isolation and without mutual implications, the task would be relatively simple. However this is far from the case. What we have is a complexity of forces and tendencies. The new movements are far-reaching and interrelated. As their origin and implications are traced out it is to be hoped that there will come clearer visions and sounder judgments on the merits of these newer tendencies in teaching religion.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE-SITUATION APPROACH TO TEACHING

ONE of the characteristic notes in modern religious education is the emphasis on life-situations and the experience-centered curriculum. For many years the lesson has been the center of interest in the educational program. Curriculum makers have been concerned with the preparation of lesson courses. Teachers' magazines have been lesson helps. Most workers have regarded their responsibilities as beginning and ending with the teaching of the lesson. Now all this is changed. One hears little about lessons and much about life-situations. Curriculum makers, editors, and teachers are all trying to get away from the old material-centered curriculum and to put in its place one that is experience-centered. In other words, they are insisting that the pupils and not the materials of study shall be at the heart of the educational enterprise.

* * *

What is the explanation of this shift in emphasis from materials to pupils?

It has come, in part, as a result of a change in the thinking of the time in regard to the function of education. For many years education has been thought of as a prep-

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aration for future needs. The programs of elementary and secondary schools have looked forward to the experiences of adulthood rather than to the more immediate experiences of childhood and youth. Young children have been taught to read and write not because they had immediate use for these abilities but on the ground that they would need them in later life.

A similar situation existed in the field of religious and moral education. The program was designed as a preparation for adulthood, and even for life in another world. When pupils protested against having to memorize long passages of Scripture they were given the same answer as was made to them when they complained that they saw no value in the study of Latin and mathematics. They were told that they would one day be glad that they had done this work.

In recent years this conception of education as a preparation for the future is being supplanted by the idea that it must meet present needs. This is probably due in part to the general social mood which tends to concentrate attention on the things of the present. It is undoubtedly also a result of the tendency to exalt childhood, to regard the early years of life not as a mere preliminary to adulthood but as significant in and for themselves. It is furthered by the belief that the best preparation for the future is the enrichment of present living. But various as are its roots there can be no question as to its

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importance. Already it is causing a radical remaking of curricula and method. Some of the old materials which seemed to be well established in the course of study are being set aside. That portion of the traditional content that is being retained is viewed in a new way and utilized quite differently.

Another factor responsible for the present emphasis on life-situations is a change in the thinking of the time in regard to the kind of education needed. The schools of an earlier day were dominated by the idea of a need for a general training or discipline. According to this disciplinary or "grindstone" theory of education the chief task is that of sharpening the mental powers. It was believed by those who held this theory that once this was accomplished the individual could work with any kind of material in any kind of situation. Following the analogy of the sharpening of a knife or other cutting instrument it was thought that the harder the material upon which the mind worked the sharper would be the cutting edge produced.

This idea was applied in the field of religion and morals as well as in the realm of general education. It is reflected in such expressions as "a keen conscience." Those who subscribed to it believed in the possibility of developing general moral acumen through the discipline of study.

Closely allied to the conception of education as discipline is the theory of the transfer of training. According

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to this theory it is possible to develop traits such as neatness, accuracy, speed, honesty, generosity, and the like in certain specific situations and have those characteristics carry over into the various situations of life.

For some years there has been a growing lack of confidence in the validity of these theories. Even casual observation has led to the conclusion that general moral discrimination and religious response cannot be developed in the way that was once thought possible. It has also been observed that people may develop admirable responses in certain situations and show themselves decidedly lacking in the tendency to respond in that way in other situations where a similar response would be appropriate.

Recent developments in scientific research have made it possible to subject these theories to precise tests. The results of these studies have lent support to the conclusions based upon casual observation. They leave us with scant confidence in the disciplinary conception of education or in the idea of general transfer. Indeed, the findings of science are such as to convince us of the importance of preparing the pupils as far as possible for the specific situations which they will meet by means of experience in just those kinds of situations.

A third explanation of the development of the present emphasis upon life-situations is to be found in the fact that people to-day have a better appreciation of human

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needs and a better understanding of the way to satisfy those needs than did the people of earlier times. Psychology is still in its infancy as a science, but already a vast amount of work has been done and thoroughly worthwhile results have been obtained. Even where research has not yet been able to give clear-cut and scientifically supported answers to our questions it has at least given us a new point of view and a new approach.

* * *

But how new is the emphasis on life-situations? In a sense it is not new at all. It may be said with real justice that the earliest curricula were really experience-centered. That is to say, the purpose was quite definitely that of enabling the learners to deal with the real problems of life. The education of primitive peoples was organized around the activities of warfare, food getting, social life and the maintenance of good relations with the gods. In the days of the Renaissance when Latin and Greek became prominent in the school programs of European countries, it was due to the fact that most of the available literature of the day was written in these languages. It was necessary, therefore, to know them if one was to have access to the cultural inheritance. Thus linguistic study met a real need. So we might go on to examine item after item that has been inserted in the program and we should find again and again that these things came because of human interests and needs. From this point of view the schools

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may properly be regarded as having been experience-centered.

But school programs that originally were experience-centered quickly became content-centered. Education became a tradition and the tendency was to take its objectives for granted. Social needs changed and educational curricula failed to keep pace. Materials came to be studied as if they were significant for their own sake. When teachers thought at all about the problem, they usually assumed that in some way or other the study of the materials was of real value to the pupils. If hard pressed for a justification of the materials, resort was had to disciplinary theory for support of the *status quo*. So while it remained true that lessons were taught for the sake of the pupils the connection between the content and the pupil became so remote that it frequently faded from consciousness.

What is happening now is, therefore, a recovery rather than an innovation. We are in a time of fresh examination of the educational program with a view to the better adjustment of it to the needs of the time. There is a new effort to locate the real life-situations of the pupils and to build the program accordingly.

* * *

The emphasis on life-situations has had practical and readily identifiable results. It is easy to locate in the program of to-day things that are clearly outgrowths from it.

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Consider, for instance, the new approach to curriculum ^abuilding. As has already been said, the curriculum has always existed supposedly for the sake of the pupils, and it is probably not fair to say that it was ever at any time really intended to be "material-centered." Nevertheless, as it has actually worked out, the organization and presentation of available materials have often been the first concern of curriculum makers. Now the leaders in curriculum building are quite definitely facing in another direction. They are endeavoring to discover first of all what are the needs of the pupils. They are beginning not with an evaluation of materials but with a study of the life-situations of those to be taught.

Already a vast amount of effort has been put into the task of discovering these life-situations. In the field of general education extensive studies have been made of the question of what words pupils need to be able to spell, what facts of history they need to know, what arithmetical operations they may be required to carry on. Committees and commissions have been at work for a number of years on these problems.

These modifications of procedure in the field of general education have been closely paralleled in religious education. Curriculum makers are maintaining with vigor that the life-situation of the pupils must be the foundation of the programs, that curricula must be experience-centered. In harmony with this idea much time and

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effort are being given to the location and classification of life-situations.

A second outcome of the changed emphasis is a reorganization of the program of the class period. According to the traditional procedure most of the time at the disposal of the class was devoted to the study of the materials. Their meaning was analyzed. Attempts were made to reconstruct the conditions of life in the time when the material was written. Often the period was nearing its close before the attention was turned to the problems of the day. Now the tendency is to reverse the procedure. The discussion of the present situation comes first instead of last. Materials are introduced only as they are needed.

This does not mean that materials are no longer considered to be important. In reality they are given a new and, some believe, a greater significance. Whereas before they were studied now they are used. Thus they become a vital factor in the experience of the learner.

With the new conception of the function of materials there has come a new basis for their selection. The value of the material is recognized as not inhering unconditionally in it but as residing in its effectiveness in the solution of problems. Religious educators of to-day do not assume that biblical or other material which is useful for one person is also useful for another or that what is valuable for one person at one time may be equally

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significant at another. Instead materials are judged on the basis of their usefulness in particular situations. To some this distinction may seem neither new nor important. In reality the working out of the principle is involving changes that are highly significant.

Another result of the new emphasis is the organization of the program in units that are larger and less regular in length. For many years it has been customary to divide the material up into sections of about equal length. Each lesson was planned to fit neatly into the time allowed for the class period. Groups of lessons were fitted into the program for the quarter and the year.

Now the size of the unit can no longer be determined in this arbitrary way. It must conform instead to the experience of the learner. This means that the units may vary greatly not only in size but in complexity. It means also that they must be flexible in order to provide for the changing needs of each group and for the variations between groups.

These larger units are highly advantageous in providing for organization of the learner's experience. Educators are well aware that things learned in isolation from the setting in which they are ordinarily found are of doubtful value. Again and again teachers have had the experience of teaching an item until the pupils seemed to have a perfect knowledge of it and then finding that when the need arose in the ordinary complex affairs of life the knowl-

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edge or skill seemed to have quite vanished. Under the new plan of the larger units of the experience-centered curriculum the pupils learn in more natural settings. Things that belong together are learned together and so are made usable by the learner.

Moreover, teachers are coming to recognize that they have in the experiences of the classroom real and significant life-situations. As the pupils engage in the affairs of the classroom problems arise which are just as important and just as perplexing as those which arise outside the classroom. By dealing with these problems as they arise it is possible to carry on the educational enterprise under highly favorable conditions.

* * *

How valuable is the new tendency? What is its real contribution to the promotion of good education?

It is as yet early to answer this question with any degree of finality. The movement is still in a transitional and experimental stage in respect both to theory and to practice. Just how far-reaching and how significant are the changes yet to come as a result of the widespread acceptance of the point of view it is not now possible to predict with certainty.

At present there seems to be rather general agreement that the trend is, on the whole, a wholesome reaction against certain faults in the educational program of the past. However there are those who feel that the emphasis ✓

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on life-situations may lead to undesirable extremes in theory and practice and that it may be necessary to introduce a corrective. In the meantime the whole matter is certainly deserving of interest and open-mindedness on the part of educators.

Unquestionably, the life-situation emphasis is having a tremendously vitalizing effect on the educational program. Visit one of the modern schools where an effort is made to deal with the experience of the pupils and contrast what one finds there with the situation in the traditional school. The difference is startling. It must be admitted that no small portion of the older type of program has been lacking in real interest for the pupils. It is refreshing, therefore, to see the eagerness with which they go to work when the curriculum has to do with matters of immediate and felt significance to them. The transformation is such as to delight the heart of the educator.

There are those who feel that in the tendency to concentrate on the more immediate and more obvious life-situations there is the danger of overlooking the larger and, in some cases, more significant ones. It is true that the pupils have to face situations in the home, the school, the playground, the world of economics and social relationships, in which certain modes of behavior are highly desirable. Honesty, courtesy, generosity, gratitude, good will, reliability, are all indispensable elements in a satisfactory adjustment to the environment. The pupils need

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practice in these types of behavior in the specific and varied situations of life.

But there are also certain larger situations, and these too demand appropriate responses. There are situations which cause one to ask, What kind of a world are we living in? Is it friendly? Is there a God, and what kind of a being is he? What are the great values of life? What is the meaning of Jesus in the life of to-day? What are we to think of our traditional attitudes and our great institutions in the realm of economic and social activity? What is the meaning of suffering, of disappointment, of joy, of hope? These too are life-situations, ever present and important. But because they are somewhat intangible the temptation to overlook them is great. The educational program which does so will do serious injustice to the pupils.

While the emphasis on learning in an actual life-situation is valuable, it should not be supposed that good educational practice calls for the elimination of reproduced or described situations. Undoubtedly, something is lost when these are substituted for the first-hand situations of normal life. But there is sometimes advantage in the loss. The first-hand situation in the natural setting may be so complex as to be distracting and even baffling. It may also be wasteful and sometimes dangerous. There is much to be said for lifting elements out of their natural setting so that they may have the more direct and un-

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divided attention of the learner. A thoroughly natural situation has its advantages but in other educational respects the artificial situation is better.

There is also the possibility of dealing with a situation in retrospect or in advance more satisfactorily than at the time when the problem is acute. In the latter case emotional tension may be so great as to interfere seriously with good educational treatment. Indeed, it is usually better to deal with such problems as quarreling at any time other than when those concerned are in a white heat of passion. It is generally conceded that in dealing with problems of sex the ideal educational situation is one where there is a minimum of sexual excitement. In such cases what might be considered the natural situation is in reality not the best but perhaps the poorest time to grapple with the question.

Of course the naturalness of the setting is a matter of degree. Few teachers really try to go all the way in eliminating the artificial. Even the most radical of the modernists, on occasion, lift elements out of the total situation so that they may have special attention. All of them permit some interference with the natural course of events in order that educational ends may be promoted. To do otherwise would mean that they themselves would have to withdraw and schools would have to be abolished. Teachers and schools are by their very nature intrusions and so lend an element of artificiality. It is clear that

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education cannot be confined to the four walls of the school, but there is real advantage in having schools and school buildings. There is need for opportunity for quiet and painstaking study undisturbed by the pressing nature of life-situations. On the other hand, trouble arises when the school is so far separated from life that it loses contact with it. The question on which educators divide is that of the extent to which this separation should be carried. Some go much farther than others in insisting on the preservation of the natural. On one thing the modernists are inclined to agree and that is that the traditional school is altogether too highly artificial and pays quite inadequate attention to the real life-situations.

It should be kept clearly in mind that the location of the life-situations is only the beginning of curriculum building. It is a laborious and time-consuming operation, and therefore it is not difficult to understand why so much attention has been given to it. But important as this undertaking is there still remains the task of deciding what to do with the life-situations after they have been listed. Educators must locate these problems but they must also have their objectives. An analysis of life-situations may show us life as it is but it can never show us life as it should be. It would be unfortunate if the present emphasis on life-situations should divert attention from the problem of objectives. The location of objectives will always be a major educational problem.

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TYPES OF PROBLEM INVOLVED

These problems are included not as questions in the usual sense but, rather, as indications of the directions in which further thought and research may well proceed.

1. Departmental teaching in the high school is a well-established practice. It is now also the custom in many school systems to have special teachers in certain subjects in the elementary schools. Where character education is included in the program a special teacher is sometimes employed. In such a system how can the program be built around the life-situations of the pupils without making the work of one teacher duplicate that of the others?

2. As a result of the emphasis on life-situations there have been included in the programs of the church schools certain problems and activities once considered to be outside its province. For the same reason discussions in the public schools are sometimes permitted to touch upon the moral and religious problems commonly regarded as the peculiar concern of the church. Would a further carrying out of these policies mean that the educational institutions would eventually become indistinguishable?

3. If the life-situation idea were adopted with considerable thoroughness, what would be the probable effect on the use of the Bible in the educational program?

4. A parent is interested in knowing whether in dealing with moral problems in the home it is better to resort to Bible stories or to utilize incidents from modern life.

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What light does the life-situation emphasis throw on this question?

5. If the curriculum be built on the life-situation basis, what provision will there be for developing a systematic understanding of the Bible as a whole?

6. A mother who was troubled by her small daughter's tendency to selfishness asked the little girl's church-school teacher to deal with the problem in class. The teacher replied that she had not noticed any evidences of selfishness and so did not think she should raise the point at that time but said that she would be glad to deal with the matter on the very first occasion on which there was any evidence of such an attitude. Was this good educational procedure?

7. At a high-school party some of the boys and girls were unkind to a new pupil. The teacher saw in this situation an excellent educational opportunity but was undecided as to whether it would be better to deal with the matter at once or to pass it over quickly for the time being, opening the problem up again some day in class. If he followed the latter plan, he would again have to decide between two courses of action, either to discuss this incident or to consider a hypothetical case involving the same principles. Consider the merits of these various courses.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE OF ACTIVITY IN LEARNING

THE modern educational program reveals what amounts to a reversal of attitude in regard to the nature of the learning process. Formerly education was regarded as being chiefly a matter of pouring information into the pupils. In an educational system based upon this theory the pupils necessarily played a somewhat passive rôle. Now the conviction is developing that such a process is bound to be largely futile. Educators are saying that if it is to be really effective, the program must provide for a large amount of pupil activity.

The implications of this revolution are far-reaching. They have affected every phase of the work in general education as well as the program of religious education. A generation ago teachers of science in colleges broke with tradition and grievously shocked their colleagues by introducing small laboratory courses in some of the sciences. Often they had to fight their way against determined and persistent opposition. Gradually, however, the movement gained momentum and now the method is almost universally recognized. College students whose grandfathers listened to lectures on natural philosophy are given laboratory courses in which they have an opportunity of

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working with the materials of nature instead of merely hearing people talk about them.

Some of the more extreme developments of the activity idea in education are to be found in the co-operative schools where the program provides for a combination of school work and practical experience. The student spends a period of time in the school and then goes for a similar period to a factory or store or other enterprise and takes up his work there in thoroughly normal fashion.

The idea of learning by doing has been developed extensively even where the co-operative school plan has not been adopted. Consider, for example, the programs of the agricultural schools. Instead of a curriculum made up of lectures on the techniques of agriculture, experimental farms are provided and the students learn to farm by farming. Think also of the technical schools where the everyday activities of the trade to be learned are reproduced in the school in such a fashion as to be as nearly as possible true to life.

The effects of this movement in the field of religious education have been no less significant. The slogan of "learning by doing" has been widely heralded and the results are easily recognized. Activities have been introduced into the classroom. In the more "modern" schools the program no longer consists merely of talks by the teacher or even of group discussions. Instead we find a wide range of activities, including games, benevo-

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lent undertakings and other practical projects. What is more significant is that in many instances the pupils rather than the teacher assume responsibility for planning these projects and for carrying them out.

* * *

The modern demand for an educational program which shall provide opportunity for learning through activity has several roots.

In the first place there is the idea that conduct is all important in life. Man seems to be born for action. From early childhood through to the close of life he is busy doing things. Moreover, the way in which he behaves is of great importance to his associates.

The tendency to emphasize the importance of conduct has been greatly strengthened by the widespread influence of behavioristic psychology. From the days of William James down increasing use has been made of this approach. Life has been viewed in terms of situation and response. Whatever may be said in criticism of this method as the sole procedure in psychology, and vigorously as we may reject the philosophical implications drawn by some of those who use the method, there is little reason to dispute the influence it has had upon the thinking of the time. Undoubtedly, it has had much to do with the present concern about behavior.

Once it is conceded that conduct is all important in life it is but a short step to the idea that education must work

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out in practical modes of behavior. In other words, conduct becomes the one ultimately important objective of education.

A more immediate cause of the demand for an activity program is the conviction that knowledge does not assure conduct. The principle seems so obvious that it may appear to be quite unnecessary to mention it here. It is by no means uncommon to find a person who has accumulated a vast amount of information upon a topic but who seems to be helpless in those situations in which his knowledge was intended to apply. Yet for a long time the educational program was dominated by the idea that knowledge does control conduct. This is the essence of what is known as the "ideo-motor theory" of education. On the basis of this theory all that was necessary was to teach certain ideas about conduct and these ideas would function in life.

The theory finds little support in current psychological thinking. Although there is some evidence which indicates that ideas often have an important influence on behavior, there is other evidence which shows that frequently they have only slight consequences, or perhaps none at all. For this reason the modernists insist that education must provide for something more than the teaching of ideas.

The principle holds in the field of religion as elsewhere. What boots it that we have abundant fact information

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about religion if we do not become religious persons? And yet this is a possibility and a serious danger. It has long since become crystal clear—although there are many who have not yet awakened to the fact—that it is quite possible for a person to study the Bible with diligence and yet show scant growth in either religion or morals. Knowledge about things in religion by no means assures right conduct. Memorization of the Ten Commandments or of hymns and creeds does not guarantee ethical living. Pious opinions do not inevitably lead to good behavior. The fact that a person professes to believe that a certain kind of conduct is good by no means guarantees that he will behave in that way when he has the opportunity. Contrariwise, his heated denunciation of a type of conduct should not lead us to an easy assumption that he will not do the thing himself if the occasion permits.

Another factor contributing to the development of a demand for an activity program in the schools is the recognition that activity is educationally fruitful. Much worth-while education takes place as people engage in the normal activities of life without any thought of learning anything. Important muscular co-ordinations are learned as children engage in the activities of the playground. Certain character traits, such as fair play, unselfishness, diligence, and the like, are learned under the same circumstances. Once the educational possibilities of such activities come to be recognized, the desirability of

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including them in the program of the classroom suggests itself.

From the idea that activities are educationally fruitful to the theory that activity is an essential part of the learning process was but a step. Prominent educationists began to assert that people never really learned anything until they had used it. An early statement of this principle is to be found in William James's dictum, "no impression without expression." Essentially the same idea is involved in the doctrine of "the complete learning arc."

Once this principle began to be generally adopted the case for an activity-centered program was won. Educationists agreed that the schools must set up programs of activities in the place of the older type of lessons.

The change from a procedure in which the pupil was more or less passive to a modern activity program has been gradual. First there was added to the lecture program certain expressional work. Thus the class recitation was enlarged by the addition of notebook work, wherein the pupils were expected to reproduce in writing what they had heard in the main part of the lesson. As variations opportunity was given for drawing, the pasting of pictures, the making of models in clay or plasticene. In each case the theory was that what was said to the pupils was more likely to be made vivid and to be retained if it were "expressed" in some kind of manual activity.

Another stage in the evolution of pupil activity appeared

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when manual work came to be regarded as beneficial of and by itself. Here we have the explanation, or at least the theoretical justification, given for much that has been done in the field of religious education. This is particularly true of the work of the "vacation" schools. In the programs of these schools a large part of the time has been taken up with needlework, weaving, basketry, and woodworking. When inquiry was made as to the reason for including these things in a program of religious education, the answer almost invariably forthcoming was "handwork builds character."

Still another stage in the evolution is found in the introduction of social-service activities as a supplement to the basic teaching programs. The pupils were told stories about sharing with others and were then given opportunities to make scrapbooks for children's hospitals, or to write letters to children or missionaries in foreign lands, or to make up baskets of food for needy people, or to make cash contributions for various benevolent causes.

More recently there has come still another stage in the evolution of the activity-centered program. Many educators have taken the position that the activities should not merely supplement the regular program but should be its very core. The principle has been laid down and widely accepted that the curriculum should be "a graded series of experiments in social living."¹ In other words if

¹Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education*, p. 103.

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what the pupil needs is not to study about religion but to have an opportunity to live religiously, naturally it will be advisable to begin with the simpler situations of everyday life. Then having achieved a degree of success in these, he may be given an opportunity to participate in the more complex situations.

* * *

That the new approach to the educational task has advantages is clear. Consider, for instance, such a simple example as that of learning to tie a knot. Few would suggest the attempt to teach people to tie a "half hitch" or a "bowline" without giving opportunity for practice in actual making of the knots. Good educational method requires that the learner have the rope put into his own hands in order that he may learn to tie knots by having the experience of tying knots. Similarly, there are few who would seriously argue that one can become a pianist merely by hearing about piano playing. Again, no amount of lecturing or notebook work or clay modeling will suffice to teach the playing of baseball. There must be real ball playing with real balls and real bats. We might go on to the analysis of learning to sing, or to shoot at a target, or to sew, or to conduct a worship service. In each case physical activity on the part of the learner is indispensable, for the learning involves the attainment of physical skills that cannot be obtained without practice in those activities.

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Another advantage is that activity stirs up educational interests. A class may be taken on a trip to visit a hospital or a nursery or the headquarters of the Board of Missions or any one of a score of the institutions that might be mentioned. From the visit grow questions that may be utilized as motivation for extended and profitable classroom work. A group of Beginners when taken on a walk or when having a party, may discover that the quarrelsomeness of some of their members interferes with the enjoyment of the experience. Thus they become conscious of a need to learn how to associate agreeably with each other. A class of Intermediates planning a worship service may begin to wonder how the Psalms came to be written and why some of them seem so much more suitable than others for use to-day. Out of this may come an interest in the Bible as a whole, a topic which under older practice many pupils have characterized as uninteresting.

The activity emphasis has also been of great help in making it easier to measure progress and to discover uncared-for needs. Under the other plan there was little way of learning whether the principles discussed in the lesson period really worked out in conduct. Now we can watch pupils as they engage in normal life activities. Thus progress in religious living, or the lack of it, is readily observable. Difficulties that the pupils face become evident. When teaching was largely a matter of expounding a lesson, this diagnosis of need was frequently a

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difficult matter. Most teachers saw little of their pupils outside of class. Many made an effort to compensate for this lack of acquaintance with the practical side of the life of their pupils by recalling their own youth and by reading books on child life. Now that they associate with the pupils in some of their normal activities, they understand them better and are much better able to help them. Again and again teachers have supposed that pupils know an item quite well only to find them seriously handicapped when they begin to carry out some kind of project for which that information is needed. Not only does the activity reveal deficiencies in knowledge, it also shows specifically where the lacks are.

A peculiarly significant result of the new programs is found in the fact that they help to overcome the attitude that religion is something quite divorced from the rest of life. The older programs tended to take people away from the practical affairs of everyday. Theoretically, they sent them back better prepared to meet their problems, but the plan did not always work out as it was intended to do. In a great many cases good impulses were allowed to burn themselves out in talk. The emotion generated by the study became an end in itself instead of an impulse to action. The new programs are less likely to show this weakness. They tie up discussion with practical activity. In a generation of boys and girls trained under the system there should be less of the idea

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that religion is something to be talked about on Sunday and forgotten during the rest of the week.

* * *

The emphasis on activity in education has been highly advantageous but, if it is to yield the best results, some safeguards must be provided.

To begin with, the contention that activity is the ultimate in life and hence in education is open to question. As a matter of fact, a stout argument may be set up to show that activity is not ultimate at all. Why should a person want his neighbor to do so and so? Because he wants the experience that results from that behavior. Why should one want to travel or to read books or to build a house or to play a game? In each case the activity gets its motivation from the fact that it is expected to give a pleasant experience. It is well to recognize that most of the pleasant experiences come as a result of one's own activity and that of his neighbors, but nevertheless activity is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

It is important that the value of the relatively passive aspects of life be not overlooked. Many of the finest experiences involve little activity. What activity is necessary to appreciate a beautiful sunset? What activity is involved in trust in God?

The answer to these questions will depend on the way in which the word "activity" is interpreted. Some psychologists hold that all life is activity, and even thinking

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is impossible without it. They say that in thinking the vocal cords operate in such a way as to produce the sounds that are made in talking but that the sounds are so faint as to be classed as inaudible.

If activity be interpreted in such a broad sense, there will be little hesitation about saying that there is no life without activity, but it is important that when the term is used broadly we should admit what has been done. It should be recognized that there is a sharp difference between the kind of activity involved in appreciating music and that required for producing it, that painting a sunset is quite a different activity from looking at and enjoying it. There is good reason to believe that insufficient allowance is being made in our educational programs for this important difference.

Furthermore, it is abundantly clear that not all learning involves activity in a reasonable sense of the word. Consider the process of learning to recognize the members of a group of people. Is it advisable to include activity in the learning process in this case? Some feel that it is. They have found that when introduced to a person it is well to say over several times the name of that person. Now, herein there is a certain activity, but clearly it is quite a different kind of activity from that involved in piano playing. And even the activity of repeating audibly the name of the new acquaintance is not indispensable.

In reality, a large amount of education takes place with

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a minimum of pupil activity in the sense in which activity is usually interpreted. Here is the whole program of preaching. There is a considerable tendency to-day to belittle its significance. Perhaps its importance has been vastly overestimated. But surely it has not been without results.

In like manner the movies occupy a large place in the life of to-day. They are sometimes credited with some educational advantage and more often charged with serious moral hurt to the spectators. Now, in viewing the movies there is slight activity indeed. Therefore learning from the movies is quite a different thing from what is ordinarily implied in the educational principle of learning through activity.

To-day extensive use is being made of the radio, and beyond doubt educational results are being obtained. But in listening to the radio the learner is about as passive as it is possible for him to be. A serious mistake is made if it is assumed that there is no learning without a considerable amount of physical activity on the part of the learner, and that therefore the radio is doomed to be an educational instrument of little account.

Furthermore, it seems necessary to admit that emotionalized ideals do seem to have some effect on conduct. The reformers are undoubtedly right in warning against leaning very much on that item in educational work. And yet there is real evidence that many people are doing

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things to-day, or refraining from doing them, on the basis of being a good citizen, or of being a Christian, or of being loyal to the political party or the fraternal order or what not.

It should also be kept clearly in mind that activity does not necessarily and inevitably lead to desirable learning. Going on a hike, packing a dinner for a needy family, conducting a worship service may lead to the development of desirable habits and attitudes and again they may not. The consequences may be quite undesirable. Rivalries may be generated. Antagonisms may be intensified. A class may learn co-operation in the packing of a Thanksgiving basket or it may learn quite the opposite. Boys and girls may learn to work together on committees or in other enterprises or they may become less co-operative. The pupils who assist in the program of mission work may become more sympathetic and interested in those for whom they work or they may develop a sense of superiority. It is entirely possible for activities to produce undesirable as well as desirable results.

Finally, there are those who suggest that there is a danger that the new programs will encourage the tendency to substitute activity for thinking. This is an age of activity. People are already much inclined to do things and to go places. There is real need for quiet and the opportunity to think. An educational program which fails to meet this need encourages a tendency already over-

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emphasized. A system of religious education which emphasizes activity to the exclusion of thinking is as unbalanced as a system which makes thinking and study an end in itself. Activity loses much of its educational value if pupils do not have the opportunity to draw conclusions from their experiences.

TYPES OF PROBLEM INVOLVED

1. In a certain elementary school there is a special teacher in charge of character education. The school program as a whole provides for a considerable amount of activity. There is a question as to the amount of activity that should be included in the character-education program. Some feel that there is activity enough in the school and that what the pupils need chiefly is opportunity to think about some of their problems. Others feel that a discussion program cannot be as fruitful as one which provides for activity. Consider the relative merits of these positions.

2. A young man has two opportunities for service. He has been invited to help coach a high-school football team and also to teach a class in a church school organized on traditional lines. He feels that he cannot spare the time for both. In which would he probably find the greater opportunity for moral education?

3. Many young people have heavy schedules involving much activity. Some of them belong to several organi-

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zations all of which include in their programs hikes, parties, organized games, dramatics, social-service activities, and the like. Is the church school justified in adding any more activities of the same kind to an already overloaded program? If the church school should commit itself against a policy of duplication what is there left for it to do?

4. Does the age of the pupils have anything to do with the amount of activity to be included in the church-school program? If so, should the amount of activity increase with age or should it be reduced as the pupils grow older?

5. The programs of the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and other organizations of the kind provide a much larger amount of activity than is ordinarily found in the church-school curriculum. Consider the respective merits of the two types of program.

6. When plans were being made for a new educational building for a certain church it was proposed that a gymnasium be included. Some objected on the ground that a gymnasium without proper supervision was worse than useless, and that since there seemed to be no possibility of providing such service the whole plan had better be abandoned. What light does educational theory throw on the merits of this argument?

CHAPTER IV

THE EMPHASIS ON INTEREST AND ATTITUDE

EDUCATORS have come recently to a new appreciation of the significance of the attitude of the pupils to the educational process. They have begun to realize that it is by no means enough that pupils should be exposed to certain situations or be drilled in certain responses. They recognize that the way the pupils feel about the work of the school is equally, or perhaps more important than the things which they do there.

As a result of this attitude we hear on all sides the demand for an educational program which the pupils will enjoy. Teachers are expected to make the work interesting. Curriculum makers are asked to plan programs that will appeal. Interest has become a magic word in educational theory and practice.

All of this is in marked contrast to the earlier point of view. It is not so long ago since many people believed that the value of a piece of educational work could be measured in terms of its distastefulness to the pupil.

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The new attitude has two roots. In the first place there has been the development of the idea that pupils learn more readily and better when they are interested.

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There is psychological evidence in support of this position. It has been demonstrated that interest in a subject actually increases one's ability to retain it. This is also borne out in everyday experience. The boy who goes to the grocery to buy supplies for a hike in which he is interested is more likely to remember what he wants than if he had gone for some articles which his mother needs but in which he had no especial interest.

A second factor in the development of this new attitude is the recognition that the appeal to fear of punishment or promise of a reward may have undesirable consequences. It is true that such an appeal does sometimes hold boys and girls, and even older folks, to their work and thus secures results. Educators have begun to realize, however, that there are "attendant" or "marginal" learnings which take place along with these central learnings and that these may be undesirable even though the former are quite satisfactory. Thus if we appeal to the spirit of rivalry in order to get a group of pupils to memorize a psalm, we may have better success in accomplishing our purpose than if we had not made this appeal. But we may find that in addition the pupils have learned to be snobbish or selfish or jealous in their attitudes toward each other. Thus the accomplishment of our central purpose may be more than counterbalanced by these undesirable "marginal" learnings.

Recent studies in psychology, psychoanalysis, and

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psychiatry have brought to us an even greater realization of the seriousness of some of the attitudes thus produced. It is by no means necessary to agree with all of the theories advanced by some investigators to recognize the contribution that has been made. Evidently, emotional health is of high importance and many serious maladjustments of personality are rooted back in attitudes developed early in life. There can be no doubt that cases of rivalry, jealousy, fear, resentment, hate, and the like have been developed by some of the educational methods of the past and that these have had disastrous consequences. Schools, churches, homes, each must accept a share of responsibility for the bad results that have come.

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The development of the idea that genuine interest in the work is the only really safe basis on which to proceed has had a long history. There have been preserved quite a number of pictures of schools in the Middle Ages. In many of these drawings there appears a representation of a bundle of switches. In those days this was the mark of a school just as the cap and gown is used to symbolize education in our day. Evidently, the teachers of those times planned to have their pupils interested in their work and adopted the means that, in their judgment, would prove most effective in securing that interest. But the motives appealed to were not so much inherent attractiveness of the subject as the interest of avoiding a penalty.

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The tendency away from these methods dates back to the work of Comenius and Rousseau, of Pestalozzi and Froebel. Comenius is remembered especially as the author of the first illustrated textbook. Rousseau was the great exponent of naturalism. Pestalozzi developed, among other things, object teaching. Froebel established the kindergarten. All of them contributed to the tendency to emphasize interest in education. Although we have said hard things about some of these reformers, especially about Rousseau, we have proceeded to adopt their ways of thinking to a degree that even in their optimism they might hardly have expected.

Later educationists have added to the impetus given by these men and now the importance of interest is conceded in a way that has never before characterized education. It is generally agreed that the amount of learning that takes place varies in direct proportion to the degree of interest aroused and that inherent interest, in contrast to that aroused by the hope of reward or the fear of punishment, is the only kind to which the teacher may appeal with any degree of assurance that permanent and worthwhile results will be secured. As a result educators are giving an enormous amount of thought and effort to the question of pupil interest.

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The change in point of view has had a marked influence on educational procedure. An early evidence of this is

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to be found in the demand for a method of teaching which would provide for a point of contact between pupil and teacher. The idea was that the teacher should catch the interest of the pupils at the very beginning of the lesson period by discussing something that would make an immediate appeal. Once the point of contact had been established the teacher was to lead the attention from it to the lesson itself.

As this method actually worked out it was not always successful. Often the teacher was able to hold the interest of the class only as long as he remained with the point of contact. When he attempted to make the transition from football or the movies or current events to the lesson proper, the interest of the group was frequently lost.

It soon became evident that something more than a point of contact was needed. Educators then began to turn their attention to the plan of including in the curriculum materials and activities which should themselves be interesting. As a result a vast amount of effort was expended in determining the interests of the pupils of varying ages and different social groups. The materials themselves have also been canvassed with care so that they might be classified on the basis of their appeal to the pupils.

Further study of the problem suggested that the deepest and the most genuine interest is aroused when people are consciously working toward some desired end. In other

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words, the pupils are more deeply interested when they are working on an undertaking which commends itself to them, or when they are trying to find an answer to what they regard as an important question, than when they are listening to a good story or doing something which is entertaining but has no value beyond the momentary pleasure it creates.

As an outcome of this conviction there developed an emphasis on "the purposeful activity of the learner" as the essential characteristic of good education. This meant that the pupils should be required to engage only in activities which they regarded as being of value to themselves. Thus before asking them to memorize a psalm the teacher should make sure that they appreciate something of the satisfaction that would come to them in repeating the psalm from memory in a worship service or in making some other practical use of it.

Indeed, some educators go a step further than this and suggest that the activities of the classroom should be initiated by the pupils. The advantages of this plan are apparent. In no other way can we be so sure that the pupil really "purposes" to engage in the work of the school as when he is doing something which he himself has suggested.

As a result of this change in attitude there has come a further modification of classroom procedure. Much time and effort are now being expended in demonstrating to the

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pupils the value of the activities of the classroom. More and more the work is being organized around projects and problem solving. A new technique has been developed for the carrying out of a project or the solving of a problem in which the "purposing" and "planning" of the undertaking by the pupils are important steps.

* * *

Perhaps none of the modern tendencies in education has been misunderstood to the same extent as has this emphasis on interest. On every hand we hear criticism of the doctrine, and in the majority of cases the condemnation has been based on a misunderstanding of what educators mean when they suggest that education should be interesting.

One misconception is that held by those who feel that an interesting school program will relieve the pupils of the necessity of making any real effort. This is what is usually meant by the familiar remarks about "soft pedagogy" and "sugar-coating education." We are frequently told that this interest emphasis is demoralizing.

Now, whatever else may be said in criticism of the theory of interest and its practical results in education, it is certainly a misinterpretation to hold that the leading advocates of the idea desire and expect that all effort will be eliminated from the school. In fact, their position is essentially the opposite of that. The intention is to get from the pupil a greater amount of effort than was ever

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called forth by the traditional method. They recognize that the amount of progress made by the pupil is largely determined by the effort which he makes, and they hold that interest in a piece of work is the thing that will release effort as nothing else will do.

A second misconception is based on the assumption that educators must confine themselves to the present interests of the pupils. This, again, is far from the thought of modern educational theorists. What they really say is that we should begin with the immediate and present interests of the pupils and from them develop larger and more remote ones. One of the serious educational problems of this and every other age is that pupils tend to be interested too much in the near at hand and too little in the more remote and intangible. Modern educators recognize that the ability to work for something to be achieved in the future is a quality that everyone needs. They believe also that this ability is one that can and should be developed and so should be made a definite educational objective. Their hope and expectation are that pupils trained in the modern school will be more and not less able and ready to work for remote purposes than were those brought up under the traditional educational methods.

Critics of modern education are not the only ones who misunderstand the emphasis on interest. Some of those who accept the idea, among them some teachers of religion

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who are using the new curricula and new methods, are quite in error regarding certain of its implications.

There are teachers, for instance, who assume that an aim stated in terms of a question represents a real pupil problem. These misunderstand the modern position. It is true that where there is interest the pupils usually have questions to be answered. But this does not mean that one can arouse interest simply by stating a problem.

There are other teachers who assume that activity guarantees interest. Often we hear such teachers say: "I am using the project method. I have the children make scrapbooks to send to the hospital and I give a prize for the best," or, "I use the project. I have my girls cut out pictures and mount them on cardboard." Such activities may be real pupil projects or they may not. We cannot tell unless we know what motives caused the pupils to engage in the work and what is their attitude toward it.

Again, some teachers fail to realize that the boys and girls are likely to be interested in thinking about things as well as in doing things. This comes, in part, as a reflection of the old idea that the ability to think does not develop until adolescence. Modern psychologists say that they find no justification for this position. They assure us that children can and do think about important problems. The experience of many church-school teachers is in harmony with this. Indeed, they have sometimes

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found that the most genuine interest has been aroused in sessions in which there has been no activity in any reasonable sense of the word.

Another mistake which teachers sometimes make is that of assuming that an interest will continue over a long period of time. The teacher of a class which has been engaged for several weeks on a certain piece of work may be surprised to have a pupil exclaim, "My, but I am tired of this old stuff." When the teacher reminds him that he had voted some weeks previously in favor of the project, he may remark, "Well, maybe I did like it then but I am tired of it now."

Perhaps the most serious misunderstanding is that which conceives of interest as a quality which resides in certain experiences or situations. This is clearly an error. Teachers soon discover that what is intensely interesting at one time under one set of circumstances may be quite the reverse at another. Things that begin by being highly interesting may fade rather quickly into the commonplace and things which had been unutterably tiresome may gradually take on a compelling interest. Evidently, interest is not something residing wholly in the object or activity. The person to be interested must be taken into account. What, then, is the psychology of interest?

In answering this question it is important to point out that interest seems to depend on a certain combination of the old and the new, the known and the unknown, what

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we have and what we have not. It is not always easy to judge the amount of newness that is required to make a thing interesting, but the principle holds. Human nature objects strenuously to monotony.

But too much newness in a situation is also distasteful. People like to visit new scenes, to meet new people, to hear new stories, to think about new things. And yet those things must not be too new. If they are, the result is not interest but bewilderment. It is a well-known fact that the traveler who really enjoys a visit to a strange country or a new city is the one who already knows considerable about the place. Usually, the most interested visitor to the art gallery is an artist to whom much of what he sees is already quite familiar. A large part of the pleasure of viewing the new thing comes from ability to compare it with things already known. Interest is produced not simply by what is to be found in a thing but by what we bring to its interpretation from our past experience. The phenomenon may be described by saying that material to be interesting must make patterns or have meaning.

Another principle is that to have real interest there must be a certain combination of the easy and the hard. It is quite generally recognized that work that is unduly hard fails to interest the worker. But there are many who do not see that the opposite also is true—that if interest is to be captured, there must be a fair degree of difficulty in the task. Truly, there seems to be very good

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reason to believe that in our educational work we could increase the interest of our pupils greatly by making the work more difficult than it is at present. Times without number we underestimate the capacity of our pupils to deal with really difficult problems, and so we set them at work on trifling things that speedily become tiresome.

Moreover, educators should keep constantly in mind the fact that interest is partly subject to control. The skilled teacher does not rely on the interest that spontaneously arises in his pupil. On the contrary, he deliberately endeavors to create interest by bringing together things that make patterns and so generate interest. In the new thing he draws attention to elements found elsewhere in the experience of the learner and by this means is able to increase interest. By skillful use of concrete illustration, by right order and arrangement of material, interest can be generated where at first sight there seemed to be none. This is one of the marks of good teaching.

Recent studies in what is called the "conditioned reflex," or what is popularly designated as "association," throw much light on the problem. It seems quite clear that our original desires and antipathies are few in number and simple in character. From these others develop. The method is very simple and to a great extent can be controlled. A thing done in conjunction with an established response tends to become satisfying or annoying and so develops into a habit as the established response

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has one or the other quality. The formula for the development of likes and dislikes becomes then quite simple though, it must be confessed, sometimes difficult to use. If a certain response is desired, surround the situation in which it is to be developed with situations that ordinarily produce pleasant responses for the learner. If the purpose is to make a certain response disagreeable, let it be accompanied by annoyance. This method of getting responses may be called "sugar coating," but, after all, it is based on much sounder psychology than has sometimes been supposed.

Consideration of this problem leads us to the conclusion that modern educators have probably given insufficient attention to the fact that certain attitudes basic to interest can be developed. There seems to be good reason to believe that people can be taught to have a constant desire for variety. Some people are desultory in their ways of living and there is every indication that this desultoriness has been learned. It is also possible to learn industry, punctuality, regularity, reliability, capacity for work.

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What, then, can be said as to the future of the doctrine of interest in the field of education? There is every reason to believe that the emphasis has had wholesome results. Under proper motivation the amount of learning that can be secured might be increased enormously. But

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unquestionably there are pitfalls to be avoided. There are thoughtful and experienced educators who feel that already we have made serious mistakes. Unfortunately, there is a tendency for some to see only the values and others only the dangers and to act accordingly. What is greatly needed in education is the kind of discriminating understanding that will enable us to use and not abuse the principle. The future depends on the willingness of educators to familiarize themselves with the implications of the idea and to put themselves in a position to work intelligently rather than blindly.

In general, we may say that further attention needs to be given to the development of the larger interests that will serve as motive power for the more abstract and prolonged undertakings. It is true that pupils need to be interested in the immediate affairs of the school program. On the other hand, they need also to have developed interests in education itself, in the great world of affairs, in building lives that are real contributions to social welfare.

TYPES OF PROBLEM INVOLVED

1. The members of a young people's group like to plan their own worship services and manage their own parties. The leader feels that the services are not as helpful when they make the plans as when he does. He is also quite dissatisfied with the games which they select for their

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parties. What arguments are there for and against (a) giving the pupils unlimited freedom, (b) insisting on a considerable measure of control?

2. What advantages and what disadvantages are there in the plan of allowing the pupils in the church school to elect their own courses of study? Would the same advantages and disadvantages result from the adoption of this policy in the public-school program?

3. As pupils grow older should they be given additional freedom in the determination of their own programs on the basis that they have more ability in that respect, or should they be held more closely to a prearranged curriculum on the ground that they are more mature and should be better able to appreciate the need for systematic study?

4. There are those who feel that the elective system in colleges has outlived its usefulness. These maintain that while it has been a wholesome corrective of certain evils, it has been overdone and as a result college work has become in many instances quite disorganized. Is the point well taken? If so, could the principle be retained and the difficulty corrected?

5. There is much of the work in the home which children can do well, thus relieving the parents of a large part of their burden. There is the added value of this work that it gives the boys and girls useful training. Often the young people dislike the work. What is to be gained by

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insisting that the work be done? What are the objections to such a plan? Some parents try to avoid coercion by paying for the work done. Evaluate this method.

6. What are the merits and the dangers in the method of punishing children for such things as neglect of piano practice or of home assignments in school work?

7. A teacher of adolescent boys asked his pupils whether they had enjoyed the worship services of the three months just passed. One of them replied: "They were all right. I liked them as well as I ever enjoy anything we do in church, but I always feel that I could use the time in a more interesting way if I did not have to be here." What would be gained and what would be lost if his parents were to (a) excuse the boy from attendance at the church school and allow him to do the things he really enjoys? (b) Insist upon regular attendance? (c) Work for the introduction into the program of some of the activities which he does enjoy, even though they might not seem as worth while to them as some of the items which would have to be omitted?

8. A superintendent of a church school makes the proud boast that the order in his school is as good as that in the public school. To maintain this discipline he uses an elaborate system of recognitions and demerits, including, in rare instances, certain forms of corporal punishment. Comment on the educational effects of such a system.

CHAPTER V

THE DEMAND FOR CREATIVE EDUCATION

THERE is a well-marked insistence among modern educators for a chance for the pupils to create rather than merely to absorb. In other words, the school is now expected to put its main emphasis upon teaching pupils to learn rather than upon teaching them any specific items of knowledge. Those who are interested in this new emphasis say frankly that it does not matter greatly what facts pupils learn as long as they become open-minded and forward-looking.

This is, indeed, a departure from the traditional point of view. The education of the past has been quite definitely transmissive in nature. This has been true of education in general, and perhaps particularly so of education in religion and morals. Teachers of literature have been interested in passing on to each new generation the great heritage of the past. Teachers of science and mathematics have conceived of their tasks in somewhat similar terms. In like manner the church school and other institutions responsible for religious and moral training were interested in the transmission to the young of the moral and spiritual inheritance of the race. In other words, the main purpose was that of handing on to

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each new generation the beliefs and standards by which their fathers had guided their lives.

Even where the school has been interested in passing on to its pupils the results of modern research it has not always produced the type of personality which will explore new territory and discover new facts. It has been possible for students in high school and college to take many courses in science without becoming scientific and to study art long and faithfully without becoming creative artists. It is notoriously true that some of those who have achieved distinction in the field of science have been seriously lacking in genuinely scientific spirit, especially when they approach problems outside of their range of specialization.

In like manner, it has been possible to teach people much about modern interpretations of religion and morality without developing in them the creative capacity. Students have gone out from the universities, and even from the theological seminaries, possessed of the latest finding in the spheres of ethics and religion, but without much capacity for or inclination toward growth. Indeed, the education of the past has often worked against the development of open-mindedness instead of for it. If evidence be needed for this contention, it can be obtained easily. If a teacher of an adult class in a church school were to set forth a position which conflicted with the views of the members, he would probably encounter opposition. It would matter little whether his position were reason-

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able or unreasonable, well supported or the contrary. The fact of newness would be enough to condemn it. This constitutes a remarkable commentary on the kind of teaching that has been done. Evidently, in these cases, education has not been of such a kind as to develop an appreciation of new suggestions as offering possibilities of undiscovered truth and value.

✓ Now an effort is being made to change all this. The aim of the school is to be nothing less than the development of creative personality. To this end new programs and new procedures are being developed.

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The demand for creative education is in part a result of the spread of the evolutionary concept to the field of religion and morals. Once the principle of physical evolution came to be generally accepted, people began to notice certain facts which suggested that the principle applied also in the realm of social institutions and human thought. As a result the conviction soon developed that morals and religion were not fixed and unchangeable as they had long been supposed to be but that they were the product of a significant evolution.

This new conception was not restricted to the interpretation of the past. It appeared also as a prophecy of the future. The conviction developed that there would be rapid and far-reaching changes in the days ahead. It was recognized that the new manner of living and

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the new contacts to be made were bound to bring new problems for the solution of which traditional beliefs and standards would not be adequate.

So it became clear that an educational program which limited itself to transmitting the beliefs and standards of the past could not be adequate for the new day. Even if it were possible for teachers to put the pupils in possession of the entire range of moral and religious insight secured up to the present time, those pupils would still be inadequately prepared for life. As they go out from school they are sure to encounter new difficulties, many of which will be moral and religious as well as scientific and mechanical. The school graduate of fifty years ago was by no means prepared for a world in which there would be radios, airplanes, poison gas, and a score of other significant inventions with their vast retinue of economic, social, and religious perplexities. Similarly, it is impossible for the school of to-day to forecast in detail the nature of life a generation hence, and to provide its graduates with all of the knowledge and skill that will be required of them. It thus becomes necessary to face the fact that education must do something more for the pupils than merely to pass on to them the moral and religious insights of the past.

A second factor in the development of the demand for creative education is the recognition of the place of human experience and human thinking in the development of

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morals and religion. The study of history reveals a striking parallel between the experience of the race and its conceptions of God and his desires for human beings. Thoughtful and sincere students have concluded that this parallel is no mere coincidence. They take it as an indication that our religion and morality have been conditioned by experience. Put in another way, we might say that man has found God in his experience, and that he has at the same time and in the same way found the principles upon which to build his morality.

This does not necessarily mean that religion and morals have no validity beyond man's imagination. Some, indeed, hold to that position but others maintain that what man has done is to discover rather than to create. Whichever side of that question one may favor, it is difficult to escape the conviction that a significant change has been taking place in the thinking of the time in regard to the origin of religion and morality. Whereas once they were thought of as having been given to man by God, now man is thought of as having had something to do with their discovery if not with their creation.

This change in the thinking of the time has drawn attention to the need for creative personalities. If, human beings are to be responsible for the discovery and interpretation of the meanings of life, they must be capable of something more than remembering what others have thought and said. They must be made into

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pioneer spirits who are eager to adventure along new intellectual and spiritual paths.

Another factor contributing to the demand for this new type of educational program has been a better understanding of the possibilities of education. The traditional conception of education was rather limited. It was recognized that one person could help another to learn certain facts and to develop certain skills. Creativeness, however, was regarded not so much a product of learning as a gift that the person either did or did not bring with him into the world and which he could not acquire if he did not have it as a part of his original equipment.

In recent years the tendency has been to put more confidence in the possibilities of education. There seems reason to believe that skillful teaching can do much more than people have been accustomed to believe that it could do. Habits of reflective thinking, of analysis of problems, of genuine creation are coming to be regarded as definitely within the control of education. There is developing a real confidence that if the schools care to do so, they may contribute notably toward the development of creative personalities. In other words, it is coming to be accepted that creative personality is the product of creative education.

Finally, there is to be taken into account a growing conviction regarding the ability and the right of youth to participate in the creation of new moral and religious ideas.

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This cuts sharply into the traditional attitude. It has been customary to assume that the greater experience of adults entitles them to the privilege of setting the standards of the day. Recently there has come a tendency to question both the fairness and the wisdom of this idea.

The questioning of the exclusive right of adults to settle issues has come in part from the observation that experience does not inevitably develop discrimination and good judgment. There is reason to believe that the attitudes of adults are not always carefully thought out but are often the result of unthinking acceptance of tradition. On the other hand, it is often the case that youth is more open-minded than age. Boys and girls are not tied to the traditional in the way in which many adults seem to be. Sometimes they manifest an ability to grasp real issues which quite surpasses that of their elders. They see the problems of the day from a fresh viewpoint. It is undoubtedly true that not all young people are open-minded and not all adults are bound by tradition. Nevertheless, there is no good reason for restricting the decision of important questions to adults. There is a growing feeling that youth should have a share in the shaping of the ideals and standards of the new age. Having made this concession, the deduction readily follows that there must be an educational program which will equip young people to do such creative work.

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In our enthusiasm for creative education it is well that we should remind ourselves of the possibility of a misunderstanding of just what it does and does not involve.

To begin with, it may be well to point out that creative education does not necessarily imply that there are no permanent values and standards in life. Truth need not be regarded as merely a standard made by a person for a specific situation and therefore not fixed in the nature of the universe. This is a point on which there has been and probably will continue to be a considerable difference of opinion. The position that a person takes on it will have much to do with the determination of his whole educational philosophy. If he believes that there are eternal values and permanent truth, then perforce he must provide for discovery as well as creation in his program of education.

There is also the question of the place to be given in the educational process to the accumulated experience of the race. Are we to follow the practice of having each generation learn by first-hand experience independently of earlier discoveries? It has been suggested that the expense of such a policy would be terrific and the rate of progress painfully slow. There are certain experiments which have been made enough times during the history of the race to warrant the drawing of conclusions regarding them. The time may come when some of them will have to be made again under new conditions. It is felt

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that until conditions change it would be wasteful and dangerous for each new individual or each new person to persist in making them afresh.

Further, it appears that much of the progress of the past has been made by people who began not where others did but where they left off. This is obvious in the case of progress in science. It is also true in the case of those who have made contributions to philosophy and religion. It is a significant fact that those who have shown the greatest capacity for growth have usually been people who have had a large acquaintance with the past.

There is no reason for thinking that a knowledge of the past is antagonistic to the development of open-mindedness to new ideas and of an interest in discovering new truth. It is true that in the past the possession of such knowledge has not always made for these qualities. But this was not inherent in the situation. In truth, the more that one has learned the easier it becomes for him to learn, provided the teaching has been of the right sort.

Another problem which should be faced is that regarding the amount of recognition to be given to individual judgment in the realm of religion or morality. Is each person to be allowed to create his own standards and concepts?

Much as people applaud the idea of individual judgment in the matter of morals and religion there are few who are ready to go to an extreme in providing for it. It is true that there are many who hold that no person

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and no ecclesiastical or political institution has a right to dictate to any individual in matters of conscience. But some of those who are loud in their denunciation of the idea of the infallibility of kings and Popes, of parliaments and ecclesiastical councils, also cry out against the loosening of moral standards. Although they are ready to applaud some of the reformers of social and moral custom who, in the past, have had the courage of their convictions in the face of violent social disapproval, they protest against any departure from the moral standards of the day. It seems clear that enthusiastic as we may be for creative personality, most of us are ready to set some limit to the scope of private judgment.

The problem of individual judgment has social as well as individual implications. What would happen to society if individuals were allowed to fix their own moral standards and were given the further freedom of remaking them as often as they wished? In early society each small group built up its own mores. Even there thorough individualism was not regarded as practicable. Then when there came the increase of relationships between groups, it seemed to be necessary to move away from that local determination of codes. Now, with our worldwide communication and our developing interrelationships, there appears to be a growing feeling that problems of an economic and political nature must be worked out on the basis of worldwide concern and co-operation.

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Individual or small group action in the matter of moral standards in this stage of the world's history promises chaos in social affairs.

What, then, is the future of the idea of creative education? Will it persist, and if so, what changes will it bring about in the educational program?

It is somewhat soon to answer any of these questions. There is no doubt that it will leave some impression on the educational program. It would be impossible for a movement as widespread and significant to be without consequences. Just what the nature of those consequences will be no one is in a position to predict with certainty. One can speak with assurance, however, regarding the changes which already have taken place and the direction in which things are moving.

One significant point that may be noted is the change in educational aim. At the present time the tendency is to phrase teaching aims in terms of discovery. The teacher is no longer much interested in teaching facts or in pointing out principles but in helping the pupils discover these facts and these principles for themselves. Similarly, he does not teach precepts but encourages the pupils to make them.

The development of the technique of creative education is still in the experimental stage. Some interesting experiments have been carried on. Already some attention has been given to the formulation of principles for

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the guidance of others. While no doubt valuable techniques will be developed, by the very nature of the case creative education must always be primarily an experiment. Something more is involved than the substitution of certain materials and methods for those already in use. The educational process itself must be of the nature of an adventure.

There are many who feel that the solution of the educational problems lies in a synthesis between the old transmissive education and the newer creative type. These contend that if pushed to an extreme, creative education might produce chaos and thus defeat its purposes. They are ready to admit, however, that if the importance of discovery as well as creation be admitted, and if due value be placed upon the accumulated experience of the race, the concept of creativity might transform the educational process.

TYPES OF PROBLEM INVOLVED

1. Any kind of censorship of moving pictures, magazines, newspapers, or books tends to produce the result of giving the pupils a partial view of life and so controlling to a degree their conclusions and attitudes. How far can we go in this matter without leaving ourselves open to condemnation on the basis of being authoritarian and dogmatic in our treatment of the young?

2. Recently there have been developed a number of

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moral codes and self-rating scales. These are used in many elementary and high schools. The procedure usually followed is that of making the standards available to the pupils, allowing them to check up on themselves and to measure progress from time to time. To what extent is this procedure transmissive in nature? How could the exercise be modified to increase the element of creativity?

3. The full responsibility for a young people's party was put in the hands of a pupil committee. In conferring with the committee the adult counselor learned that they planned to use some games of which she did not approve. Two methods of meeting this situation suggested themselves: (a) telling them frankly how she felt about these games and why; (b) raising questions in regard to their own experience and thus stimulating them to think through the problem for themselves. What are the relative merits of these two methods of procedure?

4. It often happens that young people who are given the privilege of creating their own moral standards think their way through to a position which is not essentially different from that to which their elders subscribe. In many instances, however, they make some rather costly and painful experiments in the process of arriving at these standards. The question arises as to whether the advantages gained from the process of creating one's own standards is worth the cost.

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The problem applies to groups as well as to individuals. At the present time there is a marked tendency to disregard the standards of an earlier day and to create new ones. There are many who say that we are still in the experimental stage and that eventually our present experimenting will bring us back to a position not far removed from the one which we have so recently abandoned. If this is so, will the experimental process have been justified?

CHAPTER VI

SOME PROBLEMS OF GROUP EDUCATION

ONE of the problems to which religious educators are giving a good deal of attention is that regarding the number of pupils that shall be taught at one time. Some are insisting that it is impossible to deal successfully with educational needs unless we give individual attention to each person. Others hold that the practice of teaching individually or in small groups is highly wasteful. Again, there are those who favor group instruction as over against individual instruction but who feel that there is a better chance for real education if the class group be fairly small. These sometimes boast that in their schools the ratio of students to teachers is low. Other educational experts answer that it would be desirable to have fewer teachers and better ones. We have here a problem that is significant and difficult. Its implications for educational method and administration are far-reaching.

In considering this question we must remember that group education has been developed largely for reasons of economy. Far back in the history of educational theory and practice teachers found that they could address their remarks to groups almost as easily as to individuals and so save themselves time and energy.

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So it has come about that when we speak of education our thought goes regularly to groups of learners brought together in classes. It is true that a certain amount of individual tutoring still persists but most people get their education in schools. Individual tuition is regarded as so expensive as to be beyond the reach of all but those with abundant wealth.

Within recent years there has come a conviction that the economy in "mass education" is more than counter-balanced by its disadvantages. We have moved quite definitely away from the large class in which the lecture was the main educational method and have tended to adopt various plans that provide for larger amounts of individual work. In some schools group work has been virtually abolished and in its place have been adopted supervised study and individual conference. Occasionally a teacher makes such a statement as this: "If I had thirty pupils and had thirty hours to give them, my preference would be to give them one hour each in personal conference."

Strangely enough at the very time when the movement for individual treatment in education came to be widely heralded and extensively adopted there emerged a new appreciation of the group as an educational instrument. Modern studies in social science have brought vividly to our attention the significance of the group in the determination of modes of behavior. Scientific research has

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shown that the influence of the group is of the utmost importance and that any educational program that neglects it is bound to be largely futile.

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There is much that may be said for the plan of individual instruction. Individuals vary both in need and in capacity. It is manifestly impossible to do the best thing for each of the members of a group if there is a single standardized program for all. Furthermore, even when there are common interests and needs, we must recognize that capacity for growth differs and that the pace that is desirable for one is far from being well suited to others. To drive a pupil unduly is almost certain to produce discouragement, habits of careless and incomplete work, and so a general deterioration in education. On the other hand, a program that moves too slowly is exceedingly destructive to the good habits of the learner. It is clear that many of our schools sin against the most promising of our youth by keeping them from the opportunity to progress as rapidly as they might.

There is a deeper reason for individual work in education. One of our most important educational objectives is the development of initiative, resourcefulness, and individuality. These qualities are generally conceded to be indispensable if we are to make the most out of the individual and do the best thing for society. Highly systematized work laid out for groups and carried on in

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such a way that the whole group moves along in lock step seems to have the result of crushing instead of developing those qualities of individuality that are so much to be desired.

Recently some notable experiments have been undertaken for the purpose of providing individualization of work. In some schools the plan has been adopted of allowing each pupil to proceed from one piece of work to another without regard to the progress of other pupils in the school. In higher education we have had a long-standing tradition that the B.A. degree should be given at the end of four years of work following graduation from the high school. Occasionally a student failed to keep to the pace expected by the college and was then required to remain longer than the four years. Now some university administrators are saying that it is absurd to expect all students to conform to a standard rate of work and that the degree should be given on the completion of a required amount of work quite independently of the amount of time consumed.

What would be involved if the principle of individual programs and individual rates of progress were adopted in thoroughgoing fashion in the field of religious education? It is an interesting idea with which the imagination may play. To a certain extent there has been provision for really individual work. Indeed, some of our newer textbooks in the field of religious education have already

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gone so far as to provide for certain individual enterprises in which each pupil selects and carries on, either in co-operation with his fellows or independently of them, some project of his own. In many cases individual projects bear a relation to large group enterprises. In some of these courses the recommendation is made that the teacher make definite provision for personal conferences with each pupil during each quarter of the year and suggestions are given as to the way in which these conferences shall be conducted.

A really thoroughgoing adoption of the principle would carry us still farther. In fact, there are those who claim to foresee the time when all regular classwork and all set courses will be abolished. Instead there will be, they think, an extensive program of individual enterprises with a carefully arranged plan of personal counseling.

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Weighty as the arguments for individual education may be, recognition must be given to the significance of the case for group work. There are important and apparently valid reasons for class work of some kind.

First of all, it may be well to record the fact that group work does make possible certain economies. Teaching is largely the sharing of experience and the guidance of activity. Teachers find differences in pupil needs and pupil capacities but they find also remarkable similarities. It is quite possible to speak on a topic and capture the

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interest of numbers of people. If evidence be called for, it is necessary only to point to the modern newspaper, magazine, or radio. It is possible to offer through these mediums material that will be accepted by multitudes of people. The editor of a popular periodical selects an article to be included in an issue of his publication with confidence that millions of people will read it and be so well pleased with it that they will await eagerly the appearance of the following issue. While we have had a great increase in the variety of publications offered to the public we have also a rapidly growing circulation for certain outstanding ones. Apparently, the editors of these have succeeded in discovering common interests and needs.

Consider as another example the use of the radio in such an instance as an election campaign. Here we have an educational program. Does it yield results? Few would deny that it does. The political parties seem strongly of the opinion that it is highly effective. Here we have the phenomenon of a "lesson" for millions of people of varying ages, occupations, and interests.

Apparently, the emphasis on the peculiarity of individual needs may be overdone. It seems evident that it is possible to speak to groups with a fair degree of certainty that not a few but many will be interested.

Recently we have had a great increase in standardization of various aspects of our life with real advantage.

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Even government bureaus have campaigned definitely for the elimination of unnecessary sizes and styles in various articles of commerce, and we have been pleased with the results. It is entirely possible that the present tendency toward uniformity may go too far. It is probable that we do not have enough real individuality. But a certain amount of standardization clearly pays. It makes possible more product of a better quality at a lower cost. There seems to be good reason to believe that the principle applies in education also, though quite possibly not to the same degree.

The argument for group education, however, goes much deeper than the matter of economy. There are certain educational values in the group that are highly significant.

The group may easily become a stimulant to thought and work. Evidence for the stimulating effect of the group is abundant. Class projects are usually more interesting than individual undertakings. Often projects shared by a number of classes or by a whole department are still more interesting. The joy of working together, the thrill of having a share in something big, the satisfaction of winning group approval for one's contribution to the project, all add to the interest.

Furthermore, recognition should be given to the fact that the attitudes of various members of the class have an important influence upon the conduct of other members. If the group as a whole, or some of the leaders in it,

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approve a certain kind of behavior, the tendency is for all the members to bring their conduct in harmony with the standards. In like manner the disapproval of the group may become a powerful deterrent.

It is recognized, of course, that group attitudes may work against instead of for the desired educational objectives. But this does not invalidate the point. Indeed, it only serves to draw our attention to the powerful influence available to the teacher who knows how to make it serve his purposes.

Another advantage in class work is to be found in the opportunity that it offers the teacher to deal with problems in an impersonal way. People often resent advice or suggestions even when their value is obvious and they are offered manifestly in a spirit of kindness. On the other hand the discussion of types of behavior or principles of conduct in an impersonal way does not usually occasion resentment and is therefore the more likely to be effective. Of course this impersonal and general treatment has its elements of weakness as well as of advantage. It sometimes happens that unless the teacher makes a direct connection with the individual pupil the relationship is not seen. There are occasions when it seems necessary to say, "Thou art the man." The teacher needs to know how to make the discussion impersonal enough to avoid an undesirable reaction and sufficiently pointed to be effective.

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Still another advantage in group education grows out of the fact that the group provides genuine and important life-situations. A major educational problem is to be found in the task of helping people to live and work together. For the achievement of this end it is necessary that there be actual experience in living and working together. Practical activities carried out in groups make it unnecessary that the educational principles wait for their applications. The group offers experience in living.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, study in groups offers certain opportunities for genuinely creative work. When a group of people discuss a problem the conclusions reached may be something more than the sum total of the opinions and contributions of the different participants. In other words, the conclusions of the group are a product rather than an accumulation.

* * *

The tendencies toward individualization and toward socialization of education have had certain practical outcomes.

On the one hand there has come a distinct reaction against the kind of mass education in which the whole class moves along, or is expected to move along, at an even pace. There have been developed various plans for individual work under supervision and sometimes with a minimum of oversight. In some cases it has worked

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toward a program of personal counseling instead of one of class lecture or even of group discussion.

On the other hand there has been a distinct change in classroom management in order to provide for the use of our better insight into the nature of group education. For instance, there is what is often called "the socialized recitation." As long as a class was thought of as being merely an economical method of educating a number of individuals the relationship of the pupils to one another was a matter of little concern. A chief effort of the teacher was to keep order, and this was accomplished largely by setting up walls of silence between the pupils. The teacher then proceeded to lecture the pupils or to test their ability to recite. Recognition was also given to the fact that while one pupil recited the others were being helped by the additional repetition. Furthermore, some use was made of the motivation of rivalry that could be aroused in such a situation.

But when educators awoke to the social significance of the classroom marked changes took place. It then became necessary to regard the class and to have the class regard itself as a genuinely social group. Teachers adopted the plan of directing questions to the entire class rather than to individuals. Pupils were encouraged to address the class instead of the teacher and to speak so as to be heard and understood by the whole group. Some have gone so far as to appoint pupil leaders of classroom work

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with the teachers performing the functions of guides and counselors.

Another outcome of the new insight into the educational value of the social group is the deliberate fostering of group consciousness. This is reflected in many phases of the church-school program. Its influence is to be seen in the development of the organized class movement, which at first was confined to adult groups but later spread to classes of younger pupils. In a real sense the election of officers and the routine of class business helped the pupils to feel themselves members of a group. Similarly, department and school organization helped to develop social relationships. Opportunities were provided for sharing in the enrichment of the programs of the departments and of the school. As the classes participated in the activities of the larger groups they came to think of themselves as belonging to them.

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What, then, can be said as to a solution of the problem? Again we may answer that a good educational program must take account of both principles. Only by a combination of individual and group work can a really satisfactory education for the individual be provided.

Moreover, the degree to which emphasis will be laid on either group work or personal counseling will be determined by educational ideals. If the primary interest is in socialization, class work will probably come

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to be recognized as an excellent opportunity for its realization. If the development of individuality be emphasized, undoubtedly greater stress will be put on personal work.

It is true that the two emphases are not wholly in contrast with one another. Nevertheless, there is a difference, and the tendency has been to emphasize either one more than the other. At present educational thought is directed almost wholly to the social aspects of life. Yet there are some who feel deeply and speak vigorously on the other side. They hold that, important as is the job of learning to get along with others, there is an educational objective that is even more fundamental, namely, the ability to get along with oneself.

The task, then, is not that of choosing between these two but, rather, that of deciding on the emphases to be put upon them. Undoubtedly, provision should be made for both individual and group work. The only question is how much of each will be required in a balanced program.

TYPES OF PROBLEM INVOLVED

1. It is sometimes held that the old-fashioned one-room ungraded school had real advantages over the modern closely graded, highly organized school. What arguments can be advanced in support of this position?

2. A prominent educationist has said that the most

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effective educational institution is a large family group in which the children of various ages have the opportunity to learn from those who are older and to teach those who are younger. What are the implications of such a statement for the practice of the various institutions for general and for religious education?

3. A certain city school board set aside a sum of money for character education. There was difference of opinion as to the best use to be made of the money. Some wished to secure teachers who would go into the classrooms and discuss moral and religious problems with the pupils. Others thought that the money would be better spent in securing persons trained in personal counseling who would work with the pupils individually rather than in groups. What are the relative advantages of the plans?

4. The question of the relative values of personal counseling and classroom instruction in the field of morals and religion has a bearing on college administrative policy. In dealing with college students which is more needed to-day?

5. Some parents follow the practice of teaching their children at home until the work of the elementary school has been covered. They argue that children educated in this way learn more quickly and have a better grasp of the work than they would otherwise obtain. Consider the merits of the argument.

6. What advantages and what disadvantages would

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there be in dispensing with the church school and leaving the responsibility for moral and religious education of children chiefly to the home?

7. Some of the newer curricula for religious education provide for individual projects to be used at the discretion of the teacher. In what circumstances would the use of such projects be advantageous?

CHAPTER VII

SYSTEMATIC AND OPPORTUNISTIC TEACHING

ONE of the unsolved problems in the field of education is the extent to which teaching should be planned in advance. It is possible for the educator to lay out a program of work to cover the entire school period and to follow it closely. On the other hand, the teacher may meet the pupils without a predetermined plan and be guided by the events of the day. He may begin not with what he would like to teach but with what the pupils would like to learn.

School systems vary greatly in the degree of centralization and uniformity displayed. In the educational system of France there is to be found an example of highly centralized and rigidly planned school work. There the whole program is determined by the authorities at headquarters. Furthermore, the time schedule is so rigidly fixed that an inspection of it shows what is being done at a given time in every school in the country. In America we have more flexibility and local control. The states are not all alike in this respect, but in general the tendency has been away from such extreme centralization.

The International Uniform Lessons give an example of centralization. For many years a single lesson committee

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undertook to set up one program of lessons to be used by pupils of all ages in the Protestant Sunday schools of America. Indeed, for a time this committee consisted of two sections, a British group and an American group, and an effort was made to provide a common lesson for the whole territory. Through the work of this committee topics for study were set up several years in advance for multitudes of people, most of whom the members of the committee had never seen and whose names they did not know.

At the present time there is a marked tendency to regard rigidly prescribed programs as detrimental to the best educational results and consequently to be avoided. Some of our modernists say that we should issue to teachers and their pupils suggestions and source materials, but that the real decisions as to the program of work must be left in the hands of the local group. Some go so far as to say that a local school should have no general curriculum but that each study group should be the final determiner of the program.

The two tendencies may be conveniently designated as systematic and opportunistic. Advocates of the systematic plan in a somewhat extreme form agree that the program should be laid out in advance by educational experts and that teachers and pupils should follow the scheme with little regard for passing interests and needs. They maintain that at the end of such a program the

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field as a whole will have been covered with a minimum of waste. Advocates of the opportunistic method feel quite differently about it. They hold that it is far better to seize the pupil's immediate interests and needs, whatever they may happen to be, and to utilize them for what they are worth educationally. They admit that at first sight this may seem quite haphazard and might be expected to yield a fragmentary and unorganized education. They maintain that as a matter of fact the plan leads in the end to a more extensive and better organized knowledge than does the other.

Of course few people go to extremes in either direction. Many of the advocates of a quite systematic program would be ready to lay it aside under some circumstances in order to deal with immediately pressing problems. On the other hand, even the radical advocates of the freer method usually provide for some systematization of the work. Some of those who have written with great enthusiasm in support of the idea that pupil interest and initiative should be dominant in the program indicate that they expect that there will be a course of study and that it will be followed.

What we really have is a mixture of the two principles in varying degrees. Actually educational theorists might be arranged along a scale beginning at one end with those who believe in a rigidly systematized program and proceeding by degrees to the other extreme of a large measure

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of opportunism. The result would be a gradual progression by such small steps that it would be difficult to distinguish between the ideas of a particular theorist and those of the one just above or just below on the scale.

But while the differences between those near each other are small there is no question about the significance of the differences between those nearer the ends of the scale. A modern opportunistic school is a vastly different thing from one with a rigidly set program. Some judgment as to the relative merits of those policies is most desirable. It is hard to believe that one is just as good as the other and that it makes no difference in ultimate results as to which plan is adopted. Educationists may very properly examine the conflicting tendencies with care.

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Opportunistic teaching may be defended by a number of weighty arguments.

To begin with, it is clear that this method makes it easy to get into the program significant life-situations. Of course there are those who maintain that education is essentially disciplinary in nature and that it matters little what the pupil studies so long as it is difficult. But among the others it is generally agreed that in school we should provide opportunities for the pupils to develop good responses to the kinds of situations that they are likely to meet outside of school. In other words, we are to take the present and prospective living of the pupil

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and modify it in the directions that we believe to be improvements. Obviously, if we allow the pupils to guide the selection of the curriculum content, we shall have brought into it things that have to do with their living.

We may also concede that opportunistic teaching has an advantage in securing interest, a significant factor in learning. Information and modes of behavior tend to stick if they make patterns with the existing equipment of the learner and are almost sure to fade away when there is no pattern. Now, the teacher who proceeds on the opportunistic basis has little difficulty with the problem of relationships, for the program is guided by the patterns of the pupil's experience. Consequently, things hold together and interest is secured.

The objection is often heard that the present interests of the pupils are decidedly restricted in scope and that an educational program that is limited in that way must inevitably be narrow in range. The answer is that interests, when given a chance, lead to other interests. The pupil may begin work on a project. As he goes along on the job he may find it necessary to go to the library to find the answer to some question, and while there becomes acquainted with various books. The piece of work will probably involve difficulties that he had not expected and awaken interests that had been quite dormant. One thing leads to another, so that at the end of

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the first task he has more unsolved problems and more genuine interests than he had at the beginning.

* * *

Systematic teaching also has its advantages and due recognition should be given to them.

First of all, it should be noticed that there is more practicability to it than many have supposed. Individual needs vary, but they have also a remarkable way of repeating themselves. Teachers who have had extended experience in educational work bear testimony to the regularity with which certain problems emerge and to the striking similarity of form that they manifest from one occasion to the next. It is possible to lay out in advance courses of study that with remarkably little change will meet the needs of the pupils.

This being true, it becomes clear that systematic teaching makes possible certain economies in education. There are those who exclaim that when it comes to such an important matter as education we should not count the cost. Now there is much to be said on that side for human life is infinitely valuable. Yet it is necessary to count the cost. At the present time there is a certain amount of time and money going into educational work. Many people are of the opinion that the amount should be increased. They say that it is impossible to spend too much on education. When they realize all that such a statement involves, they sometimes make the much

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milder one that we are not likely to spend too much that way.

But the argument that the investment in education should be increased greatly does not alter the fact that at the present time the available resources are not unlimited. Furthermore, there is excellent reason for saying that whatever the resources may be there is everything to be said for making the least possible waste of them.

There are reasons quite apart from the questions of possibility and economy for giving careful consideration to the idea of systematic teaching. For instance, we need to remember that systematic work may be really quite interesting. There is a certain satisfaction in having things in an orderly, logical arrangement. With some people this interest is highly developed. On the whole, we might probably say that it is a mark of maturity and quite desirable.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that when the curriculum is determined by the pupils' suggestions, it will happen frequently that the program includes not the most significant but the most familiar. Pupils do not always know their own needs. Careful studies with the aid of research techniques may reveal far more about personal and social needs than any kind of report by the class itself. If the experiment be made of forming a list of possible topics for consideration in a class and

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having the pupils check the ones they would like to have discussed, it will often be found that the ones most frequently checked turn out to be the least interesting of the lot. Usually they have been worn threadbare already while areas of great interest are unexplored. Of course the opportunistic teacher tends to break over the line of the well-known but by the very nature of the case is restricted in doing it. The opportunistic teacher who adheres at all strictly to the principle is largely limited in the educational program by the things that happen to arise in the ordinary course of events. On the other hand, the systematic teacher is permitted to select from the sum total of human experience those situations that may be thought to be educationally most valuable.

Once again it should be remembered that in systematic teaching it is easier to break the whole into smaller, more manageable units. In this way a greater concentration of attention becomes possible. In opportunistic teaching a class may be endeavoring to calculate the cost of a picnic and may be learning incidentally a considerable amount of arithmetic. In the systematic class, instead of facing such a wide variety of problems involving a number of types of arithmetical processes, a single item may be separated out for special attention. In opportunistic teaching the class may be engaged in a discussion of the real meaning of the book of Daniel. This may lead to many questions of date, authorship, and original purpose

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of the book. Another class may be working systematically on a much more limited problem. The task in the latter case will probably be simpler and more manageable. An appropriate slogan for the systematic teacher would be "divide and conquer."

Systematic teaching has the advantage of providing a better length and distribution of practice periods. We know that we learn most economically when the period of practice is neither too long nor too short and neither too close to other periods nor too far removed from them. In general, daily practice is much more desirable than an equal amount of time concentrated in less frequent periods. A considerable amount of careful research has been carried on for the purpose of determining the ideal length and distribution of periods in such things as spelling, writing, and the use of the typewriter. In the field of character education we do not have such precise information on the point but the principle undoubtedly holds.

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Evidently, there is need for recognition of the two principles of opportunism and of system in a program of education. The work may be made so systematic that it is devoid of interest and almost wholly lacking in value. It may also be opportunistic to the point of being desultory. Furthermore, what would be unduly systematic for one person or under one set of circumstances might

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be quite satisfactory for another person or at a different time. There can be no simple and easily applied rule to cover the case. Possibly as near as we can come to a general statement would be this: be as opportunistic as is necessary to get interest, vitality, and usefulness, and be as systematic as possible without sacrificing unduly those values.

It should also be borne in mind that the logical and systematic is often the psychological. Indeed, fundamentally there is no real conflict here. The difficulty is that the arrangement that is logical and therefore psychological for one is lacking in logic and hence unpsychological for another. In general, the more mature person educationally is ready for and demands a kind of organization that is ordinarily designated as logical while the beginner needs what is usually regarded as more psychological. The difficulty arises when the teacher endeavors unduly to impose his organization on the mind of the pupil. The pupil should be expected to make progress toward maturity. He should advance to the stage where he is able to use and consequently desires the more rigidly and hence really more simply organized arrangement. The teacher may well encourage the progress, but he will be well advised to exercise discretion and patience. Probably it is fair to expect more capacity in the pupils of the upper grades to work systematically. Current practice is often the opposite.

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TYPES OF PROBLEM INVOLVED

1. Psychologists sometimes emphasize the value of regularity and system in life. What light does this emphasis throw on the question of opportunism in the educational program?

2. Frequently in the course of a discussion of one problem another, which seems equally or perhaps more important, comes to the attention of the pupils. The leader has then to face the question of whether it is better to set aside the original problem and proceed to consider the new one or to postpone a consideration of the new one until the original question has been thought through to a satisfactory conclusion. What light does modern educational theory throw on such a dilemma?

3. The Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A. have regularly maintained departments of religious work providing for certain devotional meetings, study classes, and similar projects. However, the leaders have been by no means ready to concede that the religious significance of the organization was limited to the work of these departments. Many, indeed, claim that the major religious and moral effects come as a result of the activities of the physical, social, and other departments. In this respect the policy of these associations has been markedly different from that of the church school. Consider these programs in the light of modern theories of educational method.

4. Great interest has been shown within recent years in

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programs of systematic moral education in the public schools. The plans usually provide for the setting apart of periods of time for a consideration of moral problems. Some oppose the scheme on the ground that the work can be done much better incidentally than as a formal part of the total school program. They point out that in the discussions in the classes in history and English, and to a degree in other subjects, moral issues are frequently raised. They draw attention to the fact that many moral problems arise in the normal course of the school life itself. Their theory is that discussions arising at such times are more vital and fruitful than those introduced in a course in morals. Others take the position that unless specific provision is made the question of moral interpretation is likely to be neglected or crowded out. Which group has the weightier argument?

5. In one locality the committee responsible for the program of week-day religious education asked the teachers to submit outlines of the courses which they proposed to teach. One of them replied that she had no such course, that she planned to face problems as they arose. The committee questioned whether satisfactory work could be done on that basis. Were they right? Think of arguments in favor of each position.

6. There is a growing feeling regarding the value of spontaneous worship. Does this mean that all formal worship should be eliminated and that leaders should

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introduce worship only when there is a real feeling of need for it?

7. In the early days of the young people's societies of the various denominations little provision was made for study courses. After a time systematic mission study and Bible study programs were introduced. Was this educationally advantageous or was it an evidence of reversion to tradition?

CHAPTER VIII

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW METHODS

THE development of the new methods of teaching religion is being accompanied by far-reaching changes in other phases of the educational undertaking.

The necessity for these changes is not hard to understand. The traditional program was built around the old-style lesson with its emphasis on material. For this kind of lesson it was desirable to have class groups of approximately the same degree of intelligence and maturity. Hence the emphasis on grading the pupils. The lesson lent itself to treatment in the brief half-hour periods set aside for the purpose. The work was facilitated when each group had a separate room but where this was not possible a corner of a larger room shared with other groups could be utilized. The teacher's rôle was that of a purveyor of knowledge. Method consisted in a set of devices relatively independent of the material to be taught.

With the passing of the old type of lesson all of these have become obsolete. The new experience-centered programs demand new groupings, new types of administration, new curricula and textbooks, and a new kind of teacher.

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It is too soon to predict just how far-reaching and radical will be the changes resulting from the development of the new methods of teaching. Nevertheless, there are already indications of the direction in which these changes may lead.

Consider, for instance, some of the problems arising in the field of administration and organization. If education is to be "a graded series of experiments in social living," if it is to be a process of learning to live by living, what, then, will be the need for class periods set up in a rigid program such as has been customary?

Some, indeed, appear to think that no formal class meetings will be necessary. They hold that religion is learned, as other things are learned, in the pursuit of the normal affairs of life. But there are others who, while definitely claiming to approve heartily of the newer approaches to teaching, by no means conclude that a regular schedule of work should be abandoned. However, even these look upon the class periods as focal points in a larger program rather than as complete in themselves. If this view is adopted, it probably will call for major changes in schedule. It may be that less time will be devoted to the more formal part of the program with considerably more time being given to the enterprise as a whole. Moreover, the plan of meeting at regular intervals and of having the class periods of the same duration may be modified. Class meetings may be held only when

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the larger program calls for them. In this case the length of the period will probably be determined not by a fixed schedule but by the amount of business at hand.

In similar fashion the whole question of buildings and equipment will have to be reconsidered with care. Obviously, what was formerly regarded as ideal housing for the program will no longer prove to be wholly satisfactory. But who can say just how radical the modification should be?

Of one thing we may be sure—it will be impossible to carry on the new programs within the walls of any single building. There will be visits to libraries, to museums, and to other sources of information and suggestion. Moreover, the buildings which serve as headquarters for these activities will probably have to be especially designed to provide for work rooms instead of the present lecture rooms.

There are indications that the newer tendencies will call also for a reconsideration of the groupings of the pupils. As long as teaching meant primarily the transmission of information there was need for closely graded homogeneous groups. If education is to be carried on as a normal life activity, it may be possible and even necessary to have larger groups with more of diversity within them.

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When attention is turned to the implications of the new methods for curriculum building, the prospects are some-

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what clearer than is the case in administration and organization. Already the new influences have resulted in marked changes, and it is probable that others will follow. Certainly, the old-style rigidly organized curriculum uniformly followed must disappear. Unquestionably, there will be provision for considerable local determination of both the content and the arrangement of the curriculum. It is to be doubted if the extreme of having each group determine its own curriculum will prove either feasible or desirable. Indeed, it is notable that many of the modernists make it clear that they expect that there will be courses of study and that these will be followed.

✓ Furthermore, it is fairly safe to predict that there will be radical changes in the textbooks. In fact, these changes are already in evidence. The old-style textbooks reflect quite clearly the concept of teaching as the process of transmitting knowledge. We might appropriately designate most of them as "lectures in print." The newer textbooks quite properly resemble laboratory guides. They are built for the purpose of helping the individual or the group to define objectives, select procedures, and discover needed resources.

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The new conception of education has important implications for the teacher. Since the new programs give to the pupil much of the responsibility once carried by the

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teacher, what is there left for the latter to do? If the process is essentially one of self education through the pursuit of worth-while interests in the normal affairs of life, why have teachers? Would not the pupils educate themselves better if left quite to their own resources?

The modernists by no means concede that teachers will no longer be needed. Instead there is a general insistence that the teacher's part, though markedly different, is more important than ever before. It is true that some of the older methods must be abandoned. There should be less dogmatism and less domination. The pupil's work is not to be done for him. But there is a real service to be rendered in the way of counsel and guidance. Education becomes unduly painful and expensive when the new members of society attempt to make their adjustments without any help from those who are more experienced. At its best, education has been a co-operative enterprise between the more-experienced and the less-experienced members of the group.

What, then, are the responsibilities of the teacher in the new program?

One task is that of the diagnosis of pupil problems and needs. As has already been shown, this is basic to any satisfactory program of education. In the past there has been too much of the custom of prescribing for the learner without stopping to inquire regarding his present achievements or the lack of them. The result has been

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colossal waste and often lamentable failure. Just as the skilled physician spends whatever time is needed in diagnosis before writing his prescription so the competent educator will be clear as to pupil needs before he proceeds further.

It is true that a part of the task of diagnosis must be carried on by research experts equipped with all of the specialized skills and techniques made available by modern scientific work in the field. Already notable work has been done at this point, and the rate of progress seems to be increasing rapidly.

But another part of the diagnostic work must always be done by the local worker who has first-hand contacts with the learners. No matter how much the methods and instruments of measurement may be refined, and no matter how much research work is carried on in scientific laboratories, the need for immediate contact with the persons to be taught cannot be escaped. Human life is infinitely complex and variable and has a strange way of exhibiting unusual combinations. Diagnosis will always call for a considerable amount of individual personal attention which only the local worker can give.

Closely allied to the problem of diagnosis of pupil needs is that of testing the results of educational work. Here again a new responsibility falls upon the teacher. Until recently it has been difficult to secure definite knowledge of what was being accomplished through teaching. Some-

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times there seemed to be significant evidence of success. At other times there were indications that the work of the classroom was worthless, or even worse than that. Now, however, there are ways of measuring results which, while far from perfect, are of real value. These greatly facilitate the work of the teacher, but they also make new demands upon him. The new instruments are of little value in the hands of those who do not know how to use them.

Another responsibility of the teacher lies in the realm of the determination of teaching objectives. There has been something of a tendency in recent times to overlook this phase of the work. Some have even gone so far as to assert that the best teachers do not have predetermined teaching aims.

But no matter how much teachers approve the idea of creative education, they cannot wholly avoid having objectives. By the very nature of the case they control the situation to a degree. By the act of accepting positions of leadership they indicate that they have some kind of a purpose.

Indeed, if teachers should restrict themselves wholly to the position of presenting facts, they would still influence the outcomes by the nature of the facts selected for presentation and those omitted. As Professor Coe has well said, there can be no escape from the effects of "selective silence."

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Finally, the teacher must accept a certain responsibility for helping the pupil to get access to resources of information and suggestion. It is true that good educational procedure requires that the pupils accept a considerable measure of responsibility for locating this material for themselves. The teacher should certainly refrain from doing the pupils' work for them. Nevertheless, it is often possible for the teacher to release time and effort for more valuable activities by making needed materials readily available.

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Quite recently the new emphasis on method has begun to make an impression on the teacher-training program. There is a growing conviction that the educational process by which persons learn to be teachers is essentially the same as that by which the pupils learn. As a result there is a demand for an experience-centered curriculum of leadership training.

This marks a real departure from current practice. The emphasis in leadership training has been upon the transmission of knowledge. Attention has been given to the acquisition of information about pupils and materials and about teaching and administration. It is true that this information was often important and practical. But the method of presentation was such as to encourage the memorization rather than the use of the material.

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The new program provides for learning through experience. It makes place for a much larger amount of observation and practice work and a smaller proportion of book learning. Materials are to be made available, but only as their worth is realized and an opportunity for their use provided. In other words, the plan is essentially the laboratory method.

The newer methods when applied in the field of leadership training will probably involve the same advantages and the same dangers as when used elsewhere. These need not be rehearsed in detail here. Carelessly used the program may be wasteful and expensive. On the other hand, the experience-centered program of leadership training gives promise of greatly increased vitality and usefulness.

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The emergence of the new teaching methods has made more urgent than before the already insistent demand for accurate educational measurements. Ultimately the worth of the methods must be determined by accurate appraisal of the results obtained by them. No kind of *a priori* argument will suffice. Valuable as the critical analysis of techniques may be, the final answer must be obtained by means of measurement of results. As long as the assumption could be made that the mastery of certain materials must control life satisfactorily the problem of measurement was relatively simple. But

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when the deeper significance of teaching is made apparent, all such easy appraisal of results becomes obviously inadequate. Until we have developed thoroughgoing methods of testing educational results any kind of judgment on the worth of the new methods must be tentative and somewhat hazardous.

But hesitant as we may be to make evaluations under the circumstances, the necessity of such action cannot be avoided. If it were possible to declare a moratorium on all educational effort for a number of years, we might be spared the risk involved in immediate appraisals and adoptions. But education will not wait, because life goes on. It behooves us, then, to proceed with a due mixture of courage and caution, confidence and wholesome questioning to utilize as well as we can what seems to be the best in the new methods of teaching religion.

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